DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 144 375 FL 008 861

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TITLE Job Opportunities for People Who Know Foreign Languages.
PUB DATE Oct 76
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at language conference (Millersville State College, Pennsylvania, October 1976)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Business; Career Awareness; *Career Opportunities; Career Planning; *Employment Opportunities; Interpreters; *Job Search Methods; *Job Skills; Language Proficiency; *Language Skills; Language Teachers; Overseas Employment; *Second Languages; Translation

ABSTRACT

This ten-page booklet provides a general assessment of the job situation for people who know foreign languages and a description of how to plot out a personal profile and a job profile. Two basic categories of jobs are presented, with listings of types of jobs in each: (1) jobs based mainly on language skills, (2) jobs requiring language skills plus knowledge or training in another field. Courses of action to follow in preparing for various types of employment are described briefly. A categorized list of addresses to write to for further information is also provided. (Author/CFM)

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JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE

WHO KNOW FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

1. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Most students majoring in languages in college feel destined to become teachers if they are to make the most of their academic training. College programs often seem geared to preparing them solely for this goal if they head students toward any goal at all. Consequently, students envision themselves as teachers of a foreign language or as teachers of English as a foreign language. They are both amazed and discouraged when they find that such jobs are not awaiting them in great numbers. The competition for jobs in teaching is keen. Some schools received over six hundred applications for each language teaching position vacant for the fall of 1977. A few schools received over one thousand applications for a single position. The ratio varies according to the language to be taught, the degrees required, and previous teaching experience sought, but generally few if any available positions are not flooded with qualified applicants.

People seeking employment using their language background usually come to the conclusion that job opportunities are extremely limited. This is not strictly true. For people with knowledge of a foreign language there are many employment opportunities in the professional business area. This area offers not only a greater quantity and variety of jobs but better salaries as well. Of course, there is an added condition. This condition is that the individual have some professional skills to combine with his knowledge of languages. These skill requirements differ as widely as the job opportunities themselves.

The question then becomes one of matching the individual's personal profile against the job profile. The person must be willing to exert a considerable amount of effort on his own behalf in searching for a job and he should expect to make numerous inquiries and applications before securing a position. However, there are many success stories here. In many instances the people now employed in some professional area other than teaching never conceived of themselves as interested in nor capable of pursuing the careers they are presently involved in.

2. PERSONAL PROFILE AND JOB PROFILE

The personal profile includes the following items:

a) particular languages known
b) number of languages known
c) degree of proficiency in particular language skills
d) academic degrees or professional certificates earned
e) degree of knowledge or experience in job-related fields

Job profiles may vary according to the following factors:

a) jobs requiring only knowledge of a language versus jobs requiring knowledge in another field as well
b) employment in the U.S. versus employment abroad
c) temporary (short-term) versus career (long-term) jobs
d) paid versus volunteer work

Anyone seeking employment using language skills or a language background should carefully consider each of these. Many people discover that their proficiency in particular language skills is not sufficient to meet the requirements of jobs where speaking, writing, interpreting, or translating are integral aspects of the position. Nevertheless, for some positions, a strong cultural background or understanding of foreign attitudes as opposed to other language skills may be all that is required from language-related studies. The degree of knowledge or experience in job-related fields of employment cannot be overstressed. Again, the individual may have come by such experience in many ways, only one of which is academic or professional training. It is most valuable for the person to determine all possible qualifications he can offer as definite assets to the job.

The individual should also consider a first or second job in terms of long-range views of career opportunities and advancement. An earlier job may only be temporary, may not pay well, or may require living abroad under somewhat difficult circumstances, yet this may offer good training or serve as a proving ground for future steps up to more advantageous positions. Immediate gains or expenses of time, money, and effort should be weighed against long-term benefits.

We might divide job opportunities into two chief categories, those requiring only language skills, and those requiring these plus knowledge or experience in another field. The first category includes teaching, interpretation, and translation. The second comprises a wide range of possibilities.

3. JOBS BASED MAINLY ON LANGUAGE SKILLS

A. Teaching

1) foreign languages

a) primary and secondary schools in U.S. (public and private) -- teaching certificate requirement less rigid in private schools; certification requirements vary by state; some states reciprocate requirements;

b) college level -- requires a graduate degree with some exceptions usually made for native speakers of needed foreign languages; some U.S. professors are teaching in Canada;

c) commercial schools as Berlitz -- there are eight such schools in Washington, D.C. alone; near-native fluency usually required; few certificate requirements;

d) bilingual education programs (chiefly with Spanish speakers and American Indians but expanding into other languages) -- contact the Office of Bilingual Education at HEW.

There has been a decrease in secondary school-level and college-level positions due to dropping of language requirements, but 68 so-called "neglected languages" are taught at 168 universities by roughly 1500 teachers. Only half of these people have Ph.D.s and only slightly more than half are native speakers. There has been an increase in FLES (Foreign Languages in Elementary Schools).

2) English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

EFL and TESOL programs in public and private schools and universities; American companies with offices abroad (especially multinational companies); foreign governments (Arab nations are leading employers at present); bilingual education programs; Berlitz abroad; Peace Corps and Vista (two-year jobs with possible extensions).

Priority consideration is often given to Americans in binational centers abroad. An MAT or some specialization in TEFL is favorable for all of the above.

B. Interpretation or Translation

Employers are business firms operating internationally, book and magazine publishers, international research organizations funded by governments, international organizations (UN, OAS, IMF, World Bank). Contact organizations directly or write to U.S. govt. offices. Keep up with the news to learn of new international projects.

Professional degree certificate required for higher jobs, especially in interpretation. Contact Georgetown University.

4. JOBS REQUIRING LANGUAGE SKILLS PLUS KNOWLEDGE OR TRAINING IN ANOTHER FIELD

accounting and tax work: for foreign firms or foreigners in U.S., for American firms abroad -- hotels, corporations

advertising: foods, beverages, automobiles, cosmetics, sports equipment, soaps, perfumes, clothing apparel, records, shipping, synthetics -- American and foreign companies in foreign markets

air travel and transport: air control, piloting, airlines personnel (Pan Am, Braniff, TWA, Eastern, foreign carriers)

Armed Forces: intelligence, teaching of language and culture

banks: tellers, clerks, accountants (American banks abroad: First National, Chase Manhattan)

bilingual education programs: local and state programs with federal subsidies: Florida, Texas, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, New Mexico, California, New Hampshire (predominantly Spanish/English but changing since 1974)

customs agents: inspectors at ocean ports, airports, borders

entertainers: singers, musicians, actors

foreign business firms in U.S.: automobile (Toyota, Datsun, VW, Fiat), glassware, cutlery, clothing, ceramics, cosmetics, records, precision instruments, medical supplies, electronics, cameras -- teaching, secretarial, managerial, translating, sales, accounting, advertising, economists, sales training

foreign governments: EFL teaching on all levels (especially in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Kuwait) -- contact foreign embassy

governess: summer and yearly employment can be arranged through embassies or families (see ads in newspapers) -- foreign families in U.S. and abroad in Europe, Scandinavia, British Commonwealth, Japan, South and Latin America, Arab nations

guides: professional interpreter guides with State Department; tour guides with National Park Service in D.C., tour organization and guiding for tourists, entertainers, conventioners, families, embassy visitors, international hotel chains or hotels abroad, travel agencies

import-export firms: buyers, distributors, marketing, accounting

lawyers and legal research staffers: private firms and public (city) administration in courts, public assistance agencies

librarians: large libraries in U.S.; government libraries abroad; occasional foreign jobs offered through State Department

marketing: with international firms or foreign governments

medical: hospital aids, volunteer work as interpreters or translators, paid work as nurses, clinicians, pharmaceutical distributors abroad (Johnson & Johnson), medical supply firms selling in the U.S.

merchant marine: possible contacts with companies based in New York and San Francisco

naturalization centers: citizenship and language improvement courses

overseas business firms: over 4000 American firms have offices abroad. Some are First National Bank, Chase Manhattan, Ford, Chrysler, IBM, GE, Northrop, Lockheed, American Express, General Motors, Kodak, Xerox Corporation, Texaco, Exxon, McDonald's, Dunkin Donuts, Singer, Van Heusen, RCA, General Foods Corporation, Coca-Cola, Procter & Gamble, Johnson & Johnson, Time-Life Books. Positions include managerial, sales, accounting, advertising, personnel, secretarial, EFL to foreign employees, foreign language teaching to U.S. employees, computer programmers, economists. Countries include France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, Japan, Philippines, Indonesia, Canada, India, Mexico

public service groups: local social service and welfare, UNESCO, UNICEF, Red Cross, ACTION (Peace Corps and Vista)

ACTION
806 Connecticut Ave
Washington, D.C. 20525
toll-free number:
202-393-3111

International Voluntary Services
1515 Connecticut Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20036

publishing: writers, editors, editorialists, translators, voice taping, advertising, bookkeeping, accounting, marketing, international distributors for news agencies, religious groups, publishing houses, magazines, encyclopedias, languages textbooks

radio and TV: educational programs in U.S. and abroad, music programs, technicians and programmers abroad to train staff, videotape training abroad in countries establishing first TV station, Voice of America (extremely stringent requirements for proficiency and accent)

receptionists: hotels in U.S. and abroad, public service agencies, travel agencies

record companies: international sales and distributors for both American and foreign companies, technical teachers and advisers, accounting, advertising

religious groups: missionary-related work, translating, newsletter and newspaper writing and translating

resorts: hotels (especially hotel chains) and playlands for toruist groups, conventions: managers, receptionists, desk clerks, personnel, guides, performers (Holiday Inn, Sheraton Hotels, Club Mediterrane, Jungle Safari, Disneyland, Disney World)

scientific research and conferences: government and institute research grants to groups and individuals, to public and private organizations both nationally and internationally -- all scientific fields hire researchers, interpreters, translators, teachers, industrial advisers, travel arrangers

secretarial work: secretaries, typists, receptionists for embassies, foreign governments, U.S. embassies abroad, international firms, international organizations to do typing, translating, filing, administrative work. Contact State Department for U.S. embassy service abroad. University of South Carolina business school has special program for business training in Spanish with training in Colombia.

social work: city and state projects. Contact HEW.

stewards and stewardesses: airlines, cruiseships; U.S. and foreign companies

summer camp counselors: $300-600 per season in Vermont, France, Switzerland. Write to National Association for Summer Camps in New York, New York (exact address not known)

telephone operators: French/English in Montreal

tour guides: hotels, museums, travel and government agencies, National Park Service in Washington, D.C. business and fraternal organizations conventions, Holiday Inn, national parks

travel agencies: in cities or connected with airlines, hotels, or holiday travel groups (Cook Travel Agency, Hertz abroad)

International Visitor Information Service
801 19th Street NW
Washington, D.C. tel: 202-347-4554

waiters and waitresses, butlers, chambermaids: restaurants, hotels, resorts, domestic in U.S. and abroad; also some possibilities of personal chauffeur service -- look for ads in newspapers or send a letter of information offering your services to embassies

5. PREFERENTIAL OBSERVATIONS

A. Overall situation favors previous job-related experience, a high degree of fluency in a language, or a willingness to live or travel abroad for an extended period of time.

B. Overall situation does not favor graduate degrees over undergraduate degrees except an MAT in the case of teaching. More colleges requiring completed Ph.D. for teaching positions.

C. Jobs opening up or expanding in areas of business but decreasing in regular language teaching. Exception is EFL abroad requiring teachers for advanced English and technical English. More funding available for bilingual teaching and research programs.

D. Academic preparatior in a professional area concomitant with language training is most favorable.

E. Overall situation does not favor men over women.

6. WHAT TO DO NOW

A. Panic due to sudden realization of inadequate preparation:
   1) inadequacy of job-related knowledge or experience
   2) inadequacy of language skills
   This is not a particularly healthy course of action.

B. Take additional schooling in language or professional area. Weigh the advantages and disadvantages: financial resources, total time and cost, intensity and thoroughness of courses, changing job market, alternative types of instruction or training.

C. Take additional preparation out of school:
   1) in-country residence
   2) wide-range or in-depth reading in specific field
   3) self-study program

D. Look for a temporary job not related to your professional goals but one which offers financial stability while pursuing other professional training or self-study.

E. Look for a temporary job that offers continued language training or job-related training with a view toward eventual advancement or eventual job change.

F. Decide to look for a job that does not necessarily require a foreign language background and pursue interests in languages outside of the job.

Evaluate your situation carefully and above all discuss it with people who may be able to offer an angle you had not thought of on your own. Search out even the remotest job opportunity and do not become frustrated after you have received sixty negative answers to inquiries and applications. Let other people know that you are looking for a job related to languages. They may have connections that can make the important difference when you are long on the interest and dedication side but short on the previous experience side.

7. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Teaching positions for foreign languages in U.S.:

"Job Information Lists"
Modern Language Association
62 5th Avenue
New York, New York 10011

(available free to dept. chairmen and members of ADE or ADFL; $10 to MLA members; $15 to non-mem; updated in October, December, February, May)

B. Teaching positions for EFL in U.S. and abroad:

TESOL
Georgetown University
Washington, D.C. 20057

or: write directly to American firms or to USIS section of American embassies abroad

C. Teaching subjects through EFL or foreign languages in U.S. and abroad:

Institute of International Education (IIE)
809 United Nations Plaza
New York, New York 10017

International School Services
126 Alexandria Street
Princeton, New Jersey 08540

Teacher Exchange Section
Office of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW)
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

D. Study and research grants; teaching grants (summer, full year):

CIEP (Fulbright-Hayes)
2101 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20418

Educational Research Grants
HEW
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

E. Jobs making use of language skills:

Write directly to companies or to:

"Occupational Outlook Handbook" (revised annually; 850pp.
Bureau of Labor Statistics -- $6.25 or $.10-.25 for
Regional Office reprint sections --
1317 Filbert Street specify interest area)
Philadelphia, Pa. 19107

F. Interpretation or Translation:

regarding courses and certification:
School of Languages and Linguistics
Georgetown University
Washington, D.C. 20057

regarding employment:
Language Services Division
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Secretariat Recruitment Service
United Nations
New York, New York 10017

The American Association of Language Specialists
1000 Connecticut Ave NW
Suite 9
Washington, D.C. 20036

American Society of Interpreters
1520 K Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20005

G. General information:

Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)
1611 North Kent Street
Arlington, Virginia 22209

Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)
~~U.S. Office of Education -- HEW~~ National Institute of Education
~~400 Maryland Avenue SW~~ Office of Dissemination and Resources
~~Washington, D.C. 20202~~ Washington, D.C. 20208

H. Announcements of immediate employment:

Wantads in New York Times and Washington Post plus others

Note: Most pamphlets, brochures, and books on the subject of career opportunities in languages are not worth purchasing because they are too general and quickly outdated. Try to borrow them from a library of school department.